

Message Text

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PAGE 01 SANTIAGO 02027 051057Z

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2745

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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (ADDITION OF TAGS, EO, SUBJECT)

EO 11652: N/A

TAGS: CI, PINT, PFOR, SHUM

SUBJECT: PINOCHET COMMENTS ON DETAINEE RELEASE PROGRAM

1. DURING HIS PRESENT SWING THROUGH EXTREME SOUTHERN CHILE, PRESIDENT PINOCHET MET IN PUNTA ARENAS ON MARCH 29 WITH WEST GERMAN CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC DEPUTY JURGEN TODENHOFER. ACCORDING TO WIRE SERVICE STORIES PRINTED IN SANTIAGO PRESS APRIL 2, TODENHOFER ANNOUNCED UPON HIS RETURN TO BONN THAT PINOCHET HAD TOLD HIM THAT "ALL FOUR OR FIVE THOUSAND CHILEAN POLITICAL PRISONERS WOULD BE RELEASED IF CERTAIN COUNTRIES WERE WILLING TO TAKE THEM."

2. SPEAKING TO REPORTERS AT COYHAIQUE, PROVINCIAL CAPITAL OF AISEN LATER ON APRIL 2, PINOCHET CONFIRMED THAT HE HAD INDEED TOLD TODENHOFER THAT GOC IS WILLING "TO RELEASE NEARLY ALL OF THE DETAINEES, IF AND WHEN THERE ARE COUNTRIES WILLING TO RECEIVE THEM." PINOCHET NOTED, HOWEVER, THAT TODENHOFER HAD ERRED ON NUMBERS SINCE "THERE ARE ONLY 1,107 DETAINEES, PLUS A MORE OR LESS SIMILAR NUMBER OF PRISONERS

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PAGE 02 SANTIAGO 02027 051057Z

WHO HAVE BEEN SENTENCED BY THE COURTS OVER WHOM THE

GOVERNMENT, RESPECTING JUDICIAL AUTONOMY, HAS NO CONTROL."

3. COMMENT: IN EFFECT, PINOCHET IS REAFFIRMING PLEDGE FIRST MADE IN SEPTEMBER 11, 1974 SPEECH TO RELEASE NEARLY ALL DETAINEES, INCLUDING THOSE SERVING SENTENCES. ALTHOUGH IN HIS COYHAIQUE REMARKS HE DID NOT SPECIFICALLY INCLUDE EVENTUAL RELEASE OF THOSE ALREADY SENTENCED, OTHER GOC ACTIONS HAVE MADE CLEAR THAT THIS CATEGORY WOULD ALSO BE INCLUDED IN RELEASE PROGRAM. FIGURE PINOCHET USED OF 1,107 DETAINEES HELD WITHOUT CHARGE UNDER STATE OF SIEGE REGULATIONS IS 310 LESS THAN ANNOUNCED BY MININTERIOR BENAVIDES MARCH 14 (SANTIAGO 1678 NOTAL). AT THAT TIME, BENAVIDES ALSO STATED THERE WERE 1,557 PERSONS SERVING SENTENCES FOR SECURITY OFFENSES. NUMBERS FLUCTUATE DAILY, HOWEVER, AS SOME PEOPLE ARE RELEASED, OTHERS DETAINED, AND STILL OTHERS CONVICTED. IN ADDITION, GOC LEADERS ARE PRONE TO A CERTAIN FLEXIBILITY IN THE USE OF DETAINEE STATISTICS. WE REGARD THOSE WE RECEIVE AS GROSS ESTIMATES, BASED ON MORE OR LESS ACCURATE COMPUTATIONS.
POPPER

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